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Message Text

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11
ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-02

USIA-15 PRS-01 SP-02 /038 W
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R 101826Z SEP 76
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
TO USIA WASHDC
INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 4706

UNCLAS CARACAS 10901

USIAC
STATE FOR ARA

SUMMARY: FOR THE THIRD TIME IN SEVEN MONTHS THE GOV HAS TAKEN "CORRECTIVE ACTION" AGAINST CARACAS MEDIA WHICH PUBLISHED MATERIAL CONSIDERED BY THE GOV TO BE DETRIMENTAL TO PUBLIC WELFARE. EACH INCIDENT HAS BEEN RELATED TO THE NIEHOUS CASE. THE LATEST INVOLVED PUNTO, A SMALL LEFT NEWSPAPER PUBLISHED BY MAS, WHOSE EDITION OF SEPTEMBER 9 WAS SEIZED BY POLICE. END.

1. THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR ANNOUNCED THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS FORCED TO SEIZE COPIES OF LEFTISTS PARTY MAS PUBLICATION PUNTO "FOR TRYING TO INSERT WITHIN ITS PAGES AN ARTICLE OF INJURIOUS CHARACTER AGAINST THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC AND THE NATIONAL ARMED FORCES." THE STATEMENT SAID THE "BOTHERSOME PROCEDURE" WAS TAKEN UNDER A LAW THAT "PROHIBITS THE PUBLICATION OF VIOLATIONS AGAINST THE DIGNITY OF THE CHIEF OF STATE AND HIS FUNDAMENTAL INSTITUTIONS." THE TEXT ADS: "IT MUST BE MENTIONED AT THIS TIME THAT THE GOVERNMENT HEADED BY MR. CARLOS ANDRES PEREZ HAS BEEN VERY RESPECTFUL OF THE FREEDOM OF PRESS AND FREEDOM OF SPEECH," BUT THAT IT COULDN'T STAND BY AND PERMIT THIS ARTICLE TO BE PUBLISHED "AS A LAWFUL EXPRESSION" UNDER THE FREEDOM OF PRESS PROVISION.

2. THE OFFENDING ARTICLE WAS THE PUBLICATION OF A LETTER FROM MAS DEPUTY MEMBER OF THE NATIONAL CONGRESS, SALOM MESA ESPINOZA, TO MEMBERS OF HIS PARTY. MESA, NOW UNDER ARREST IN THE SAN
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CARLOS PRISON ON CHARGES OF BEING IMPLICATED IN THE KIDNAPPING

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OF US. BUSINESSMAN WILLIAM NIEHOUS, COMPLAINED THAT HE WAS A "PRISONER OF THE GOVERNMENT, PERSONIFIED BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC, OF FEDECAMERAS...; AND OF THE CIA. THE CRIME THAT THEY HAVE COMMITTED AGAINST ME HAS NO ANTECEDENTS IN OUR HISTORY."

3. TWICE BEFORE THE GOV MOVED AGAINST THE MEDIA FOR "BREACHES" AGAINST "THE SECURITY OF THE STATE" ON STORIES CONNECTED WITH THE NIEHOUS CASE. IN ONE INCIDENT, THE POLICE SWOOPED DOWN ON THE PRINTING PLANTS OF EL NACIONAL AND LA VERDAD, AND SEIZED THE EDITIONS OF THE TWO NEWSPAPERS AS WELL AS THE OFFSET PLATES OF LA VERDAD BECAUSE THE PAPERS HAD PUBLISHED THE KIDNAPPERS' MANIFESTO IN CONTRAVENTION TO THE WISHES OF THE GOVERNMENT. LA VERDAD HAD THE STORY IN PRINT ONLY BECAUSE WORD OF THE GOVERNMENT BAN WAS NEVER PASSED ON TO THE EDITOR. POLICE FOUND THEY WERE MISTAKEN IN THE CASE OF EL NACIONAL WHICH DID NOT PRINT THE STORY.

4. THE SECOND CASE INVOLVED A TELEVISION BROADCAST BY CHANNEL 2, WHICH REPORTED A COPS AND ROBBERS TYPE MEETING OF THE NEWS DIRECTOR OF THE TV STATION WITH AN ALLEGED MEMBER OF THE KIPNAP GANG. THE ALLEGED GANG MEMBER (NOW BELIEVED TO HAVE BEEN A HOAXER) REPEATED ALL THE TERMS LAID DOWN BY THE KIDNAPPERS. AS A MEASURE OF ITS DISPLEASURE. THE GOV CLOSED DOWN THE STATION FOR 72 HOURS AS PUNISHMENT FOR VIOLATING THE LAW REGARDING "PUBLIC SECURITY."
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